JEWEL VENTURE

(chapter 1 B)

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Jewel Venture 簡單的旅程 (Jiǎndān de lǚchéng) (shen-den-dah lee-chun)

Chapter One B: Mind and Body At War

"***Good night… son.***"

The room returning to darkness and Xiao-lan eating just a little bit, before laying down, his eyes shaking after what he said... feeling dread over the whole day in general... he takes a breath and snuggles his head against the pillow, closing his eyes. The next day he heads out, going past the library following Hoodini Owl World Maps app on his Carlsung W10 smartphone, walking down passages between buildings and streets he never seen before until finally getting lost. Though luckily he gets lost near a small wooden stand with a man occupying it. Xiao-lan rushes over in a sigh of relief until realizing the man was strange, wearing a chef's outfit with a shrimp on his shirt, but also wearing texan cowboy black gloves and leather hat, with even more western looking holster on his belt. This is probably the strangest and foreign thing Xiao-lan has ever seen, and he was seen weirdly advertised stands before. The sign above him hung be iron chains connecting to shakily thin wooden polls, saying: "SHRIMP STORE, PROPERTY OF THE SHRIMP HUNTER". Xiao-lan just now notice the music, coming from a speaker behind the stand, sounding like a hindi string instrument playing, which Xiao-lan thought was a ridiculous thing to play in public in a eastern country.

"***Hey rabbit boy... my names Roundup Reagan... the shrimp hunter...***" As he says that, he puts his hand underneath the desk and turns the dial to make the hindi guitar music play louder. "***That's not your name... it says it on your name tag... Björn Ulvaeus... for Hua-jing Furniture?***" The weird man's creepy fucking smile and open eyes fade, and he looks at his chest, realizing the kid was right. "***Damn!***" The strange european man quickly taking off the badge and throwing it out in the street, the sharp point of the pin upright for anyone or anything to step over. "***That's... not safe.***"

"***Yo! Yo! Eyes over here, buckaroo!"***

"That accent makes no sens-"

"What's your name anyway, boyyy?" The swedish man pretend cowboy said this with his tongue against his cheek, giving it a sort of goofy sound to it. Xiao-lan just looking at the man, dead faced, processing it all, and then just going with the flow. "***Oh. My name is Xiao-lan, Xiao-lan Dar-***"

"***CHEWY BOY! CHEWWW-EEEEE-BOOYYYY!!***"

Xiao-lan didn't know what to response, and said through a quiet mumble: "***Wha-what?***"
"***Good name lad. Chewy boy!***"

"***What, what the-what the heck was that thing you just said? Chew-chewy boy??***" Xiao-lan trying desperately solve the meaning of something that came from pure madness. "***What does that mean?... exactly?***"

"***It's the *call* of the shrimp hunter. All you got to do is put your hands on your face… like this... see... and you... you-you do the call.....*** *Shrimpbo... Shrimp-shrimpbo!... Chewy-****CHEWY BOY! CHEWWW-EEEEE-BOYYYYY!***" Xiao-lan at this point just slaps his furry hand on his face, the slap hitting his little black bunny nose which makes a sort of teddy bear squeaky sound. He just simply asks the insane, cowboy... hindi guitar-sprimp-he doesn't even know, the insane mad where the Dojo near Hengbei Road is. He just points behind him at a wall. Xiao-lan weirded out but forgets it, looking back on his phone to kind of get a feeling of what direction he is currently facing, which turns out to be east. So figuring out he has to keep in a eastern direction, he uncomfortably waves goodbye to the street shop owner, a most horrible interaction with another human being.

Xiao-lan just uses his GPS and generally keeps his direction towards the east and follows it to eventually finding a place outside of the east Hengchun gate, then asking a random local lady where the Choro Gang's dojo is, the lady walking with her motorcycle presuming going to a repair shop nearby. She points to the left, Xiao-lan follows that direction and thanks her, though she only stares at Xiao-lan's back, in a sort of disgusted and angry manner before resuming what she was doing. In five minutes, he finally makes it to what he thinks is the right destination. Looking around he sees a large stone brick wall with a chinese redish orange roofing on his top. Following it Xiao-lan fines a iron bar circular gate and seeing an old man watering his flowers in what is a very beautiful garden with a a little river pond with lilly pads and a bunch of water flowers on it's edge, three big bonsai trees providing shed to the entire garden, with a classic japanese style wood home made into a dojo. Xiao-lan looking at it beauty doesn't really want to bother the elderly man, who had a grey chin beard and small mustache, and his forehead large with his slightly greying black hair, eyes squinting a lot like he would give you a suspicious or nasty look... though still so calm and relaxed. "***Don't be afraid, young sir... you won't bother me... I give you access to enter this "holy" ground.***" Suddenly the lock on the gate opens and with a gesture of Choro's hand, the metal bar gate opens up like a violent wind came behind Xiao-lan. "***How?...***"

Xiao-lan looking behind, not feeling a gust of wind behind him, and the gate didn't look electric at all. He just looks back to Choro puzzled. "***How did you do that?***"

"***Hehe... those aren't the questions you came here for, huh? A feeling told me you would come today."***

"A feeling?"

"Well… mainly your father."

"Oh."

"He said you have problems you wish to talk to me about. And I will say it right now, I don't have all the answers. But I have inclination, I can guide… but you are the one who is going to have to get those

legs burning to reach where you want to be. I can help with that walk though, give you some principles to follow." Choro's wise words reaching but being too much to understand all at once… just like most of his life currently.

"Ok."

"So…" Choro got up, and a bit, and moved the bench he was sitting closer to Xiao-lan.

"Why did come to me?"

"***Yeahh...***" Xiao-lan comes into the garden and looks to see a bench there, and then takes a sit there, Choro putting his water jug down and taking a seat next to Xiao-lan, giving him his attention. "***I have a lot of problems, people judging me for how I look. People keep saying i'm one of those euclideans, I guess those aliens like me. A tourist even said they did some genocide in the past.***"

"***Yeah. *That* war… Does that really bother you?***"

"***Does that really bother you?***"

"***Yeah, of course it does. They claiming i'm born a killer. And I don't know if i'm... i'm *destined* to be one. Or that identity of myself is going to take over my life, and I will never make new friends, once I leave to go to college and I leave my friends here. Everyone will hate there, and my peers will mock me still the people here... (*sob*)... I won't even have a *life*.***"

"***Xiao-lan... I'm going to ask you a simple question, ready?***" Xiao-lan rubbing his eyes, sniffing to keep his emotions in check. "***Umm, ok. Yes?***"

"***If you know you didn't do anything wrong, you didn't kill anyone. Then are you a killer?***"

"***I guess-***"

"***Stop. Listen to my lips... Are you a killer or a bad person, if you didn't kill a man or hurt a lady, steal from a kid? If you're grandfather beat up someone, should you be beaten up as penance?***"

"***No.***"

"***No. Now listen, it doesn't matter where you came from or how strangers see you. You know you didn't hurt anyone, and your body knows it, your spirit knows it. There hasn't ever been someone's blood on your hands, right?***"

"***Yes.***"

"***Don't let what those kinds of people say get into your head. Tragedy and grief makes us judge all people who look like the people who hurt us. People are silly and want to use others as a strawman for***

their own family and personal problems. That's why people have empathy. To help guide us to think with open minds and be better. But let's get off of this topic, that's not the only reason you are here, yes?"

Xiao-lan tells Choro about his bully problem with Zhu, who is a part of a biker gang that steals from small Hengchun shops and is Xiao-lan's bully at middle school (who would have graduated 5 years ago, yet never passed the fifth grade). The trees and wind swaying through the air as the sound of a busy street and common noises in suburban houses are drown out by a strange silence and the swell of pollinated flowers and fishy algae smell. "***How does his bullying affect you?***"

"***He's on my back always, day in and out. Always pushing me around and talking down to me. Even when I leave the school, he knows where I live-***"

"(*sighs*) Everyone does..."

"...and-AND when I don't follow his ridiculous commands he finds me on the different Xitan roads diverting from the main Xitan Rd (East and West. And kick my butt and stole my pocket cash after."

"***Well... that is a big problem.***"

"***I can't take his-his *bullshit* anymore! I just want that *insufferable* *douchebag* out of my *LIFE*!***" Choro looks down, in thought, Xiao-lan noticing, his eyes looking for a response out of the old man.

"***I know you may not like him, I mean I certainty won't if he beat me up and robbed me. But... you shouldn't call him an*** "*insufferable douchebag*". "

"***Why the heck not? He's pushing me around all the time, bullying or whatever you adults call it!***"

"***There's a topic in a well-known book that you should note. Have you heard of Carl Jung?***"

"***No... is he american asian?***"

"***WHa-no! No boy... what makes you say that?"***

Xiao-lan moved closer to answer, Choro bring his ear closer: "***Jung... it's similar to Hun, or Hong, or Chun. And Jung is like Jūngé, meaning: "monarch to fight".***"

"***Ha... that's is observant of you, a very good quality... but no. He's a famous swish philosopher, reworked psychology itself. He wrote a few books, and in one of them it talks about a figure called*** "*The Shadow*"."

"***Shadow?***"

"***Yes, its where when you meet a person you don't like, and you hate their personality, or just want to throw a shoe at their head. Often, you forget to look inside yourself, and see your own flaws. And you don't realize you may have the same problems as the person you don't like. That's one of the first and most important steps of enlightenment- empathy, to understand people's suffering.***"

Xiao-lan shoots up, his skin hairs straight and his eyes full of rage. "***I don't share flaws with my bully!***"

Choro leaning slightly away still sitting down, his other leg resting on top one of his knees… his hands on his legs, patient and calm… but ready for anything. "***Perhaps... but it's best to look inside and know you do have flaws, flaws that can lead you down roads you don't want without even knowing. Not knowing them can lead to bad things, and you can't understand yourself without facing yourself.***"

"***Well if that's the case, how do fix them?***"

"You dream well, and you know how to guide it… you often find yourself getting a better picture along the journey."

Choro looks at Xiao-lan with worry and looks around to answer his question to his favorite tree nearby he planted himself, and the shadow that being casted by the bright tropical sun.

"***Look there… the brown tree infront of us. It grows with bright green leaves and strong branches, but it carries a black void behind it. A darkness that follows the tree everywhere in the day, and sleeps with the tree at night. You can never fix your flaws, that's impossible. You will have to carry those for the rest of your life. But you can make them lighter, shine and wax the good parts of your being for people to see. So when they see the bad, they know that the good in you will win out.***"

"***Okk... I thought you were going to train me to fight, not give me lectures. What's this all for anyway?***"

"***You will know, but you need to understand when and why you should raise your fists, before being able to do it. Go home now, and come back to the dojo early, and when the school week arrives, come around 3:00-4:00 PM.***"

"***Yes, thank you sir!***"

"***Refer to me as Sifu Choro!***"

"***Ok! Thanks Sifu Choro!***"

"***Bow, you must bow before saying it.***" The boy bows, and the wise master keeps telling him to look into his eyes while bowing. Once fully bowing, Choro saying "***Come back tomorrow.***" Xiao-lan straights his back and runs back home, failing to get his backpack on. Choro Gang laughes, and waves goodbye, going back into the dojo courtyard. The princely boy that Xiao-lan met: Suchiru, hops with one working leg with a cane and a mop. Hearing the conservation, strangely clothed boy looking curiously and asks: "***Who was that mutated rabbit kid? And why does he keep his hoodie on? It barely hides him…***"

"***You'll know soon enough, Suchiru. You cleaned the bathroom already?***"

"***Yeah, it's sparkling clean.***"

"***Then clean the floor in the mat room, and you'll be done for the day.***" Suchiru growls and mumbles to himself at how stupid it is for an injured person to be working, as he takes his mop and bucket back into the dojo.

Xiao-lan returned back home, mysteriously a black helicopter with a white number faded number on it flow strangely close to the ground. Xiao-lan was weirded out and thought about the helicopter until making it home, he called out for his father... but noticed there wasn't a meal and the lights were out. When going back outside, rushing around to find where his father went, he found there was a paper nailed into the wall which was rare since Adam usually used a magnet or a pin to stick his sticky notes on the metallic rim of the door. Reading it, it said:

"To my neighbors and adopted son.

Sorry, I need to go on a business vacation to Singapore for a few months. Please don't enter my home during then because I will not be home, and don't call me, instead go to my lawyer for help to contact me. If my son is reading this, your entire school education has already been paid for and sign till high school. After that you'll have to find a job to pay for college classes. Thank you for the discretion and please don't contact me until I come back.

Signed, Adam Dart of the South Hengchun Province."

Xiao-lan knew reading this something was very off. This was typed and not written, which his father almost never typed notes, and the way it was written isn't like him at all. He's always finding a way to put something cute or saying something passionate when he knows Xiao-lan is reading it, and he always ended it with: "Love, your best Dad", never even suggesting Xiao-lan was adopted, since it always brothered him anytime Xiao-lan ever asked, saying: "*Don't worry about that. That family will find you eventually. But you still got me.*" Also he was never formal in his letters and speech when talking to the neighbors, strangers, or even Xiao-lan, his own son. Thirdly, Adam Dart always said: "This place is the best vacation I can ever have" when anyone asks why he doesn't take vacations… he NEVER leaves Taiwan, even for his own mother. This was beyond suspicious, there is something going on here... but Xiao-lan didn't know what else it could be and eventually gave up. Since the door was locked, and he was tired of thinking about anything taxing that day, he walked around the house and struggled to get up a tree, giving it a couple tries as he fell down in different and interesting ways that made Xiao-lan more frustrated. Eventually he got up without the thin stem tree bending down and got to his window and opened it. Kicking his old bug catcher net off that he knows his father barely ever maintains it, though taking a few swings it at with a concerning feeling he is being watched at the back of his mind once again. He gets into his room and drops his backpack lazily hard on the ground with a mouth ajar and tried eyes on the verge of closing shut. As soon as he walked to the bed, he just feel down like a tree trunk on it and fell asleep.

The next day he thought the whole thing yesterday was a dream, until looking around his house, not smelling his father's usual breakfast which he rarely didn't do unless it was his mother's birthday and was praying and mourning the loneliness without his mother being nearby or around, missing some of his family though definitely not all of them. Xiao-lan rans down he stairs, gets his stuff sorted and ready, and leaves to walk back to Choro's dojo for the first day of training. Though Timmy and Walt shown up surprisingly to his house. "***It's almost the end of the weekend, I convinced my mom I'll do better and I got some money. We can get some of that fruit and sweet ice at that place... remember?***"

"***Guys... I would *like* to do that. But I'm busy right now.***"

"***With what? Doing nothing?***"

"***Look... I wasn't planning on telling you. But I guess, yeah you guys should know. I'm going to that old man in East Hengchun place, you know, the old hermit that once was a big rival to the main martial arts dojo of Hengchun.***"

"***Oh the Wise Crane... lead by Sifu Choro Gang.***"

"***That's the old hermit's name? Is like one of those (*does a dramatic documentary*)*** "*masters of THE ANCIENT ARTS, POWERFUL and wise. the greatest among mankind*" ***Those guys, right? Like Sensei NoBOOooo!***"

The two other boys held their ears while Timmy yelled out the name in a very bad impression of a deep voice. A bike cyclist with a heart monitor on his wrist (really being his Melon Watch) was passing by on the side of the road fell down from shock and fear of the strange noise and then went back on his red steel bike and started cycling faster, thinking there was a giant rabid dog behind him. Walt recovering himself and his breath, looked back to Timmy in mild anger.

"***What-what are you on about now?***"

"***You know?-You know! Sensei Ultra Punch! Deliverer of heroic justice, baddest to the chicks… riding the best and awesome hot rod! You know… from Black Belt, Tommy Night! The best sensei of all time!***"

"***Oh my god...***" Walt says breathlessly, literally turning his wheelchair away from the other two and laying his forehead in similar positioning as The Thinker greek statue by some ancient copper carver.

"***I hate you.***" Xiao-lan responded flatly. "***What?! It's a good show!***"

"***Yeah when you were FIVE...***" Walt said loudly.

"But... ugh...!" Timmy growling and grinding his teeth he slams his fist into a tree trunk in retaliation for not getting a positive response, making the normal people in the park trying to enjoy their work break look at him weird.

Xiao-lan pausing then remembering to say: "***By the way! That was some *random* junk found in that fisherman's store when we were sailing, that my Dad got for free, it looks bad and it had no price value whatsoever. Plus, it's B rated garbage made by Jollyvile from the United Republic, like that Anabelle movie you were talking about.***" Timmy smiles and says in a teasing mocking way. "***Oh you may hate it, but I always will be its number one fan.***"

Walt just wanted this to end: "***I'm sorry-what were you saying before, Xiao-lan? Before my idiot brother open his biased mouth?***" Timmy just gives a short glare and moves his head dramatically with overdone sigh. "***Yeah, I apologize for my superior taste-what were you saying before?***"

"***Well, I was trying to say was I getting trained by Sifu Choro himself. He was the one who trained my father in martial arts.***"

"***Oh really! Dude that guy is strong, I saw him cut down a tree once when we were camping. He cut it down with one swing, like a samurai with bamboo.***"

Walt coming into the conversation, rolling in. "***Why not that… umm… " Leopard Man-eating" dojo? It's got more creditability and more people.***"

"***Yeah but... you know when Su-Wei and his goons were talking about being in a martial arts dojo several times?***"

"***Ohh no...***" Walt says quietly

"***Wow man... if those guys can break nine layers of ice. Man, I knew those punches weren't normal when they make me want to go bathroom every time.***"

"***tmi, Timmy.***"

"***Anyway, you welcome to join if you want. It's doesn't seem like he has a lot of students.***"

"***What time was it when you went?***"

"***Umm…"*** Xiao-lan scratching his head "***…the morning?***"

"***It might have been they come in the afternoon, since it's most martial arts school teach teens, it might be that they don't show up until later in the day.***"

Xiao-lan shrugs. "***I don't know about that... he seemed to have a lot of free time, he was just hanging around the garden area of the Dojo and watering plants.***"

"***Dude I won't really care, I want to learn how to fight. If your dad got everything from him, I want to be there with you.***" Timmy responding.

"***How about you, Walt?***"

"***I don't really have anything else to do... why not?***"

Timmy jumps up in the air with his fist raised, saying to one and all: "***Let's go do karate!***"

"***It's kung-fu.***"

"***Let's do kung-fu! Like Jackie!***" Hitting the wall of Xiao-lan's house while saying that to emphasize. Xiao-lan just grinning, thinking if the wall got a hole, he was going to pay for that. So, they walked together the long ways to the forested edge of East Hengchu, going through the old gate and reaching the large steel bar gate leading to Choro's Dojo, which was unlocked and opened. Choro was waiting there and meditating with his eyes closed, and before they even entered, he called out: ***"Welcome back Xiao-lan... I see you brought your buddies with you.***"

"***What... how did you know we were here?***"

Timmy responses: "***I am wearing my heavy and loud boots, it's been wet this week.***"

"***No young grasshoppers, I'm currently doing one of the advanced things a special kind of martial artist can do with trained endurance, patience, and wisdom.***"

"***What's that?***"

"***A ki using martial artist. I sensed your very life energy, and I can tell you guys are already good fits. You have feed your spirits with openness and mindfulness, except, the one who just asked a question... what is your name?***"

"***Timmy.***"

"***Timmy, your spirit energy is remarkable lower than your friends, you need to control yourself and look within more. Your spirit only grows if you separate your identity from the material and its distractions, focusing on the image of yourself in your mind formed by your perceived personality and flaws.***"

"***Oh... ok...***" Timmy just says awkwardly, not knowing how to make a retort back. "***Don't worry about it too much. You will learn to in life, you are too young now to not to enjoy guilty pressures. Anyways, are you here to train or say goodbye?***"

:"***No, I want to. My friend, Timmy wants to join as well.***"

"***I can speak for myself, Xiao-lan. Yeah I want to train here.***"

"***Good, then let me do one final test...***" Choro went closer, and grabbed Xiao-lan's hand, examining it. Xiao-lan surprised and suspicious of an old man touching him. "***Hey what the hell-***"

"***Shh, show me your hand.***"

"***But-***"

"***足够 (Zúgòu (zoo-co))! I will do you no harm. I need to read each of your palms. They tell your lives so far, through the lines and curves, your words may be used for deception but not your body.***"

Xiao-lan weirded out, lets Choro look at his hand, Choro staring and moving his finger across the indents of Xiao-lan's palm. Choro reads Xiao-lan's and Timmy's right palms (read the left for women (yin), read the right for men (yang)) to perhaps get a better. Xiao-lan's lifeline on his palm is long, red, and deep, indicating he is very healthy and has a great immune system, destined to live a long time. Though Xiao-lan's hands are strange, seemingly worked skin and fingers like the hand of a 60-year-old strongarmed male farmer who farmed for his entire life. Xiao-lan's wisdom line (headline) is only slightly longer but still below the normal length of a wisdom line, his long love line had splits and curved downward showing that he was willing to be stubborn about protecting and willing to sacrifice everything for love. There were also symbols surround his hands mixed with lines he never seen before, something he heard was common when men looked at Euclidean palm lines. But he had markings that seem to be made by a machine rather than grown, scars from a surgery. Though also one almost shaped like a sword, and lines that formed seven stars, a lucky number... a lucky warrior perhaps? Choro could only wonder the great meaning, but he was staring too long and decided to move on with Timmy.

Timmy's wisdom line (headline) was short, which usually means the person with the hand has less intelligence then a normal person; Choro is not surprised, had seen this in many of his past students before. But his also had much overlapping showing an indecisive and overly worried nature. Timmy's wisdom line is a different from the others the most, by having circular creases along the line, meaning the person is naturally unfocused and lazy. A good thing though is Timmy's lifeline actually more red and deeper than Xiao-lan's, meaning he may live longer; and his love line having feather-like creases on the edge, showing he is passionate about love. Finally for Walt, is the only one with a normal wisdom line, though his lifeline is the most shallow, shortest and most faded. Choro is worried but tells Walt that his hand indicates a normal decent future and finishes it by saying: "***You all have seemingly good karma and dharma already before even training here, while I can't train Walt in martial arts like you two, we can train him to figure out how to use his legs again (not with ki). You all are welcome; we still have an hour so you guys may come in and we will begin our first lesson.***" The Tiro all together: "***YESS WE GOT IN!***" But then Xiao-lan got a feeling and then a strange thought and asked: "***Hey Sifu Choro Gang? Where is Suchiru right now?***"

"***He is painting the meditation room in the dojo, you'll see it in time.***"

"***And how about his palm lines? What were they?***"

"***Well his palm lines are very similar to you guys. His wisdom line is as short as Timmy's, though without the creases. And his lifeline was about Timmy's as well.***" The palm reading was done, and the boys were ready for their first lessons in Choro's ki using kung-fu.

In the dark evening of the mixed orange and dark blue sky, the city seems like an assortment of colorful beacons of light, signs situated in different heights, all different dim colors… the city lights were brightening the darken and now sleepy land of Taiwan. Several figures in the dark, crossing the dark slim streets of Taipei, one cowboy guy barely visible in the dim light getting a bottle of sake from a street shop in the Shilin Night Market. "***Thanks mate... here's some coin for yah.***" The man walks away with the sake bottle in hand, the bartender confused as to why he would want a japanese alcoholic drink in the backstreets of Taipei. Another shorter pale green one holding on to a glider 700 feet in the air, with another one white furred skin below following close behind, jumping quickly to rooftop to rooftop even though he has a large bulky size.

They all make it to a slim street with the TAIPEI 101 tower overlooking the whole city... by the Tanuki Kun hot pot shop, then the shop itself clear what it is with the big bottle of beer statue near it's cozy entrance, and one opposite side a shop with a funny italian chef statue called: "Midosuji", selling french looking pastries instead of italian food. A right in the open wooden door, with cravings of three cats trying to climb up to a window with the fourth cat smiling, already inside. The three with their faces and body covered in shadow, stare onward at the poem written in the door:

"Cats' Carnival

Who's who? Who's who?

Keen, agile, strong and supple leaps and bounds.

Who's who? Who's Who?

Quick thinking, needle teeth, alert eyes smiling wide.

Cats' Carnival. Unafraid of night as dark descends.

Cats' Carnival.

Leaping skyward, jumping earthward. I can do anything!

Swift, confidence, all courage, decisiveness, take-charge!!

All strength yet restrained, sudden spring strike!

Sharp eyes! Keen ears!

Feline grace, bewitching all like magic!!

Loving fun, yet self-contained.

All poise, precision, perfect balance. Spot on!!

Cats' Carnival, unafraid of night as dark descends.

Cats' Carnival, everlasting waves of joy.

Repeat three times, my honored guests, A bursting joy my house cannot contain."

The bulk large one speaks first, loud deep and direct, never distracted or concerned about anything other then the mission. "***Our employer said to say this phrase three times backwards, instead of forwards.***"
The smallest one, with hair that looks like a broom speaks in a chirping though loud way. "***Oh reallllyy?***"
The middle one, the most normal, and the cowboy-looking one grunts.
"There is no damn way you making me or any of us say that kiddie poem three times."
The cowboy covered by the unlit shadows of the alley, knocking hard on the door. "***HEY! DOOR OPERATER! OPEN THE FUCKING DOOR, OR I'M GOING TO KICK IT DOWN-Ow!***"
The chirping one pinches him, and the cowboy almost gets his pistol out until the floor under them is revealed to be a trap door, which all of them fall down twenty feet down a rocky hole until landing in a strange ancient chamber, seemingly a dungeon. The cowboy grunts and cruses under his breath as he gets up, the chirping one doing a backward flip to get up; while the bulky one never even moved, falling down straight on his feet, doing a soft quiet chuckle seeing the other two get up. The only light in the ancient stone chamber was in the very back, where a cloaked figure was sitting on a stone throne.

The cloaked figure has a large bent grey hat, his face covered in with a grey bandana; his body almost completely covered by his black cotton cloak other then his black boats with metal on the back that makes a metal chain sound anytime he moves, another being a rapier's tip holding the cloak up just a little. Moving his eyes among the three, he is satisfied with the team, and gets up to greet them.

"***Hello my Misfit mercenaries... welcome to my office. I'm glad that you all showed up, it makes my job easier... when you address me or call me, call me: "Mr. Kage". I have only one job for you. Get me the mythical Jade Jewel. And you'll get paid what you deserve.***"

For the next two weeks Choro trained the kids on the basics of fighting. Both helping Xiao-lan and Timmy gain balance, telling them to keep their feet steady and flat on the ground, making a boxer's stance with his legs, and keeping one foot on the ground to help carry the body as the kick lands at it's targeted location. Xiao-lan kind of got it afterwhile, but Timmy still needed some learning to do. Then, wanting to change things up, he had them stand on wooden pillars sticking out of the sand of south beach, putting a one foot on a wood pillar and trying to stay on while the waves roll past them. Most of course, fell down at first, and mess up, but eventually manage to keep to the pillars after a few tens of tries. After that they did mostly chores for the rest, finally exhausted and wondering when they will get their martial

artist garments or what Choro Gang calls: "*The Zhi-fu*". But Choro Gang simply states they aren't ready yet.

After the two weeks, they managed to throw punches with their full body and kick with the whole body sort-of, and managed to stay on for 10 minutes at the end of those two weeks. Choro thought they were progressing well, and decided they could begin the real hard part of the training will begin. But before that, Timmy, Xiao-lan, and Walt came there on the same time and Choro and Suchiru were not there, but the gate was still opened. So they went inside and waited in the living room of the dojo, cozy with a actual full-out four person cushy couch (in a dojo?) and a plasma screen tv. Timmy being the most curious one, got the controller and wanted to see how many channels were on it, and what was the first channel that came up. Searching the channels also Walt was uncaring skimming history books and novels from Choro's shelf, Xiao-lan had his arms on the top of the couch, being as glued to the tv as Timmy. They pass a channel hosting a scene from the a female martial artist jumping off a wall while fighting a guy, being a trailer for Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon. Timmy watches to keep watching but Xiao-lan gets bored and tells him to ship… On channel 32, a weird conspiracy channel with the usual "aliens live among us" kind of theming, until they started talking about a certain object, which made him immediately say: "***Don't change channels! What's that?***"

"***From the uncover research we gained from insiders, we found out the thing the Taiwanese main party leader and president, or what he likes to call himself: "The Masked Emperor Naruhi", has been searching for this past two years. This mysterious Jade Jewel, which the artifact is said to grant any wish asked by the user. However, it was created by the King of the Taoist Gods: Jade Emperor Shangdi, and according to the myth, it's hidden in a place no mortal without a heart free of sin, pure of heart and intention, can find. The prophetic leader the Saiko Party has sent secret agents to search for it all over China, but hasn't found anything... now he sets his sights on his very own country of Taiwan. Hopefully, you live outside of the country and away from any ancient tombs, because the Leader of Formosa might be knocking at your home pretty soon.***

That's all for New Mexico's Strange Happenings of the Day, this is Michael Da-Xia Howard, and stay tune because next we are going to talk about the strange hamster criss-"

Xiao-lan grabs the controller from Timmy and turns off the tv, Timmy shock and angry at Xiao-lan for taking control from him. "***What the heck dude?***"

Xiao-lan ignores Tim's frustration and continues being excited. "***Didn't you just realized what he just said? A magic jewel that can grant wishes?***"

"***So? It got in the way of my Drama Queen show.***"

"Someone kidnapped my dad and wrote a fake note pretending to be him. And since the police probably may be in on it, maybe we could find the jewel itself before they do."

Timmy stood up after hearing this, getting argumentative. "***Kidnapped-kidnapped your dad? What are you talking about, you crazy head?!***"

"***Yesterday I listen to you complain and helped you out… so how about you gave me a hand for once, huh? Instead of me buying you treats all the time.”***

“Well… umm…”

“So are you with me or not?'

"***Xiao-lan...***" Walt looking to him and closing a book of history of railroads across China and Japan. "***You know who those guys are, it's our government. And not just anyone, it's Naruhi... the most influential and richest man in the eastern hemisphere, if you aren't including China and the European union, Novus Ordo. Xiao-lan, he isn’t someone you don't want to miss with.***"

"***Come on, guys! Where is your sense of adventure? My father beat up bad guys and people in the government all the time. Nothing got past him, and we are learning from the same man who taught him! We shouldn't be scared of some thugs and officers, I bet if we tried we could-***"

"***XIAO-LAN! Enough!***"

A cry comes from behind Xiao-lan and Timmy, and they turn to see their sifu in a mad and angry state. "***Don't talk about fighting and getting into trouble like it's a children's game! You understand me! Never get involved with Naruhi! Never! You could easily lose your *life*.***"

"***I... my father fought!***"

"***Your father is strong but he isn't superhuman, don't get yourself killed to protect your pride, think before you act. (*sighs*)... forget my special training... you Xiao-lan are not ready.”***

Xiao-lan shot up from the couch after hearing this.

“I trained with my father for year before I met you! I’m not a newbie!”

“No… We will do another session on balance today instead... and... we will go to the buddha temple in Kaohsiung, when you boys have your next weekend off. I need to show you something there. Something that will bring your spirit back to reality.”

“I’m not delusional!”

“Yes you are! And that’s my final word!”

Choro leaves the dojo in a frustrated rush and Timmy gets up and follows, while Xiao-lan touches Walt's shoulder to stop him wheeling toward the others. "***You know, at an old and fancy place like the Fo Guang Shan Buddha Museum, there's likely chance the Jade Jewel could be there.***"

"***Xiao-lan, you could get in serious trouble.***"

"***I will do anything to find my father, I don't care if I go to jail for it.***"

"***That is a virtuous goal, just make sure my brother doesn't get in jail with you. Why don't you just sit down and think about it? Let's not jump into it.***"

"***It's fine, Walt, ok. I know this is the best, it's my *only* option to find my Dad. I won't get your brother involved unless he chooses to join.***"

"***Ok then… (*licks his lips*) now can we join the others now?***"

"***Yeah, but don't surprise if I out pace your brother with my martial arts.***"

"***Ok man...***"

Xiao-lan and Walt join up with the others, Suchiru waiting in the back irritably standing to the side as Xiao-lan and Timmy step on the pillars in the garden and find their balance, while under the watchful eye of Choro Gang.

Somewhere in the Presidential Office Building of Taipei, the main office of government in the country... where deep in a dark basement, hundreds of feet underground. A room barely lit by a huge monitor, showing a map of Taiwan and all the islands of the pacific, where several places are marked by a red Xs, the majority of which are either in Taiwan or islands around Taiwan. The room is filled with a mixture of the old flag of Taiwan, with the red banner and the white proud sun over the sea; and the other flag marked by symbols of the ruling Saikō Empire, a tiger (like the formosa tiger) with a sword going through it, and a gun, forming a x cross like a pirate flag. Gold and silver wind chimes making a both well-put together melodious tune and a sharp repetitive drone. Red curtains with golden emblem of the buddist flower cover the lightless unreflective walls, with woven mandarin letters of an unknown origin written on them. Copper statues of ancient Taoist heroes of the past stand guard behind the important emperor of the present, with two large jade foo dogs on each side of the Masked Emperor's extravagant throne. The emperor wearing red and golden glittery dress garbs and ancient chinese emperor hat… like a divine placed crown by the people… with long lanky arms and legs covered with black cloth and a japanese leather armor cover his hands and legs, only his long dark purple fingers with his sharpen long pointed nails are the only visible part of his body, his unknown face covered with a pale mask depicting the face of the Jade Emperor Shangdi, King of the Taoist/Daoist gods, The Master of The Heavenly Mandate.

To his side, is his bodyguard wearing mostly samuari steel plated armor with a long red cap covering his shoulders and most of his body apart from his head, which he is wearing a golden mask of a foo dog

sightly hidden under his red and black samurai metal helmet. Also having two golden emblems connected to a golden neck chain holding his cap, the two each had two symbols: "服從, and 優雅"; while the emperor had big lettering in vertical from the top to bottom of his under-garment dress: "神聖恩賜大師". The guardian's hand stayed firm as he was resting it on the hilt of his curved sword, when a sudden beep rings across the room as a monotone voice of a reporting soldier rings on the intercom.

"***Reporting to Heavenly Master!"***

"Continue ground force soldier 42."

"The location in Bangka Longshan Temple of the Wanhua District, in Old Taipei. We looked all over the building, and looked underground and even removed and destroyed the golden Buddha and the goddess Guanyin statues. There's no Jade Jewel anymore, not the one you described. As a side note, I think I and my team have doomed our souls to the torment of Diyu."

"***Silence! The emperor speaks now, I do not care for excuses. Search onward, go to the last 10 locations and find the precious Jade Jewel. Trust in your lord, I will give you access to a lavish lifetime fill with such gluttony and alcohol, that will make the fires and torture of the Ten Halls of Diyu seem like a small punishment.***

Now… resume your work."

The call ends, and the guardian lowers himself to speak to the Masked Emperors' ear, telling his query in a held-back scratched throat whisper, a voice both clear and distant. "***Heavenly Master, why not just let me seek it out? I can do the task.***"

"***No, my faithful guardian. The task is beneath your skill level. If the troops of the lower core can't even find a simple artifact such as this, then their lives must mean little to the Heavens, and to our grand destinies.***

You must stay and complete the training of the two new members of my bodyguard core."

"***Yes... yes heavenly master.***" And so the story begins to take a turn. Xiao-lan now wants to find the Jade Jewel to wish for the whereabouts of his father, the Misfits want to the jewel to get for their buyer, but each of the misfit mercenaries plan secretly to take the jewel and wish for their own dreams to come true (Broom hair wanting infinite TNT and nukes, while the cowboy wants a beautiful buff scottish wife that is desperately in love with him (the cowboy is calm and calculative though in private wants very strange things)). While the mysterious and powerful Masked Emperor of Taiwan- Naruhi, wants the Jewel for even more mysterious reasons, sending his soldiers and goons to get the jewel at all cost.
What will happen next? Will Xiao-lan be able to become stronger and defeat his bully? Will any of the Misfits or their employer get what they desire? Or will they all bend the knee to the false divine lord of the island's domineering will?

Tune in next time, on JEWEL VENTURE: 簡單的旅程 (Jiǎndān de lǚchéng).

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TIME DURATION:

Xiao-lan's adventure time around: 2 weeks and two days.

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STATS OF CHARACTERS:

Xiao-lan (shall-lin) Dart:
(Ki Max Power: 7) (Max Speed: 4) (Physical Strength: 5)

Timmy Toth (tim-me ta-ought):
(Ki Max Power: 2) (Max Speed: 2) (Physical Strength: 2)

Walt Toth:
(Ki Max Power: 7) (Max Speed:) (Physical Strength (arm strength): 4)

Suchiru (sue-che-roo), mysterious student of Sifu Choro:
(Ki Max Power: 14) (Max Speed: 10) (Physical Strength: 10)

Su-Wei Zhu (The Zhu Dog) (sue-we zoo):
(Ki Max Power: 2) (Max Speed: 13) (Physical Strength: 17)

Tiankong Jian (The Hawk) (tai-an kong gee-an):
(Ki Max Power: 1) (Max Speed: 16) (Physical Strength: 13)

Rock and Sky (Hawk and Su-Wei's goons):
(Ki Max Power: 2) (Max Speed: 7) (Physical Strength: 9)

General Zasshu ("zazz (like piz-zazz)-shoe") General of Taiwan Marines and Ground Forces
(Ki Max Power: 215) (Max Speed: 170) (Physical Strength: 100)

Adam Dart, Adoptive Father of Xiao-lan:
(Ki Max Power: Above 10) (Max Speed: Above 10) (Physical Strength: Above 10)

Sifu Choro Gang (cho-ro gone), Owner of the Wise Crane Dojo:
(Ki Max Power: ???) (Max Speed: ???) (Physical Strength: ???)

Sensei Heise Khan (hay-say kong), Owner of the Bloody Tiger Dojo:
(Ki Max Power: ???) (Max Speed: ???) (Physical Strength: ???)

Sensei Kai, Japanese Martial Artist of Bloody Tiger Dojo:
(Ki Max Power: Above 10) (Max Speed: Above 10) (Physical Strength: Above 10)

Guardian of The Masked Emperor:
(Ki Max Power: Above 10) (Max Speed: Above 10) (Physical Strength: Above 10)

Naruhi Chao (nah-roo-high chow), The Masked Emperor of Taiwan,
President of the Saiko Party of Taiwan:
(Ki Max Power: ???) (Max Speed: ???) (Physical Strength: ???)

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(Note: There's isn't a whole lot of fightning or action in this introduction to the story, since I wanted to establish the world and characters before getting into the main plot. It's very dialogue heavy in the begining, though hopefully in chapter 2 there will be less of it. I promise after this, chapter 2 will have a lot more spice and action in it. Sincerely the writer.)

//END OF CHAPTER 1, CHAPTER 2 BEGINS ANOTHER DOCUMENT//

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